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Viet Nam Coup Was A Surprise To Gen. Harkins

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Front Page Dispatch Wire Services

SAIGON, South Viet Nam, Nov. 13—Reliable sources said today that the Nov. 1 coup against Ngo Dinh Diem caught United States military commander Gen. Paul D. Harkins by surprise despite warnings from his subordinates. The United States Military Assistance Command formally denied the report that Harkins had ignored warnings. It said the coup leaders maintained strict secrecy until their attack.

The sources said that Harkins included a paragraph in a report to Washington from the military and Central Intelligence Agency here saying he did not believe that a coup was imminent. They said that after the beginning of the coup, Harkins asked to have the paragraph deleted from the report.

Denies Deletion

The Military Assistance Command denied that any such paragraph was in the report originally and that no deletion was made.

It issued this statement:

"The revolutionary military committee (which effected the coup) advised the Military Assistance Command headquarters of the coup at 1:45 p.m. on Nov. 1, which was approximately the time of their initial attack.

"At the time, they regretted not having been able to take the Military Assistance Command Headquarters into their confidence, but considered absolute secrecy paramount to the success of their plan."

The statement said the United States military had been told of troop movements on the morning of the coup "but the cover planning had been so well conceived and executed that the imminence of a coup d'etat was not apparent."

The sources told Harkins was not taken into his confidence of the coup leaders because they were not trusted by the Diem government.

They said that United States Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was kept informed of coup plans and was told two days before the revolt when it would occur.

Reliable Viet Name sources said that several days before the coup Harkins mentioned in a conversation with Maj. Gen. Tran Van Don that he had heard rumors about a plot for a coup. They said that Harkins asked Gen. Tran why anyone would want to effect a coup against Diem because the government was winning the war against the Communist Viet Cong guerrillas. Tran was one of the three generals who planned the coup.

Symbol of Old Policy

Sources in the new military government of South Viet Nam said that junta leaders had made it clear to the United States Embassy that they privately regard Harkins as a symbol of the old American policy of support for the Diem regime, although they have made no specific desires known to the embassy concerning Harkins's future in Viet Nam.

As head of the Military Assistance Command, Harkins has charge of the 15,000 United States officers and soldiers serving as advisers to the Viet Name army in the war against the Communist guerrillas.

Lodge is expected in Washington late next week to give President John F. Kennedy a report on the coup and subsequent developments.

Lodge first will meet in Honolulu next Wednesday with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and ranking military officials for a review of the situation.

Adm. Harry D. Felt, commander-in-chief of United States forces in the Pacific, will attend the Honolulu meeting, as will Gen. Harkins.

The United States has agreed to resume full economic aid to Viet Nam, a United States Embassy official said today.

Economic aid had been tapered off in the last weeks of the regime of President Diem in an attempt to force a more liberal policy. Military aid, which made up the bulk of United States aid to the Diem government, ended

The Embassy official said that the commodity import program, which had been suspended, already had been reactivated and that new licenses were being issued. This program runs to nearly \$100,000,000 yearly. It was a month and a half behind schedule before reactivation.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary government announced that it would remove "all vestiges of the former corrupt regime," including the women's group headed by Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu.

A communique issued by Maj. Gen. Ton That Dinh, one of the army leaders of the coup and minister of information in the new government, said that a committee to plan liquidation of all traces of the government headed by Diem would be established.

Gen. Ton said Mme. Nhu's Women's Solidarity Movement was among the groups that would be removed. The sister-in-law of Diem founded the organization as a political force and ordered it trained in the use of weapons. She was killed with Diem in the coup.